



Fact Sheet

General waste discharge requirements for winery process water

Overview

Winemaking is an important industry that annually generates \$71 billion for the California economy and \$220 billion nationally, while also creating and supporting 485,000 U.S. jobs through direct employment and ancillary operations.

Winemaking also generates winery process water that has the potential to degrade groundwater quality depending on a winery's activities, size, and treatment processes. The primary concerns for winery process water that can affect groundwater quality are nitrogen, salinity, and biochemical oxygen demand.

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) adopted the General Waste Discharge Requirements for Winery Process Water (order) on Jan. 20, 2021. The order applies statewide for eligible discharges to land and includes requirements to ensure winery operations effectively mitigate adverse impacts to water quality.

Why is the Winery Order Needed?

As of 2023, only about 10% of the estimated 6,200 bonded California wineries established with the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau have existing discharge permits or conditional waivers through the Water Boards. These permits and conditional waivers contain requirements that can vary by region, winery characteristics, and site conditions. It is estimated that approximately 30% of the bonded wineries will be eligible for order coverage.

Winemakers requested the order to address the statewide inconsistencies in permitting. Additionally, it addresses the permitting backlog by providing consistent enrollment and standard discharge requirements. These streamlining efforts will allow the regional water quality control boards to focus resources on compliance rather than issuing region or site-specific permits.

Order components

The order contains the following:

- A streamlined enrollment process and multi-year enrollment schedule.
- Established tiers based on permitted annual winery process water discharge.

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General Order for Winery Process Water

design flow (in gallons).

- Tier-based requirements for:
 - Monitoring and reporting.
 - Effluent limitations and discharge specifications for process water ponds, land application areas, and subsurface disposal systems.
 - Tier-based annual fee schedule.
- A compliance implementation schedule for existing wineries.
- Existing wineries are ones in operation on or before the Jan. 20, 2021, order adoption date.
- New wineries are those constructed after the order adoption date.
- An alternative to subsurface disposal effluent limits with discharger-requested groundwater monitoring instead; regional water quality board approval required.
- Use of sustainability programs, salt and nutrient management plans, and local agency oversight programs to assist compliance.

Considerations during order development

The State Water Board collaborated with the wine industry and other interested parties by soliciting and incorporating feedback throughout the development of the order.

- Costs and Feasibility – The Wine Institute estimated revenue losses of nearly \$4.2 billion in 2020 and \$3.7 billion over the next 10 years resulting from the 2020 pandemic and wildfires, respectively. In recognition of this, the following changes were made:
 - Provided options for wineries to tailor the order to fit their site-specific situation, including controlling nitrogen and salts and reporting on compliance.
 - Established tiered requirements for wineries to upgrade ponds and disposal areas, monitor process water, and report compliance relative to its process water discharge and associated threat to water quality.
 - Provided an extended implementation schedule that allows a winery up to three years to enroll and up to five years to comply with the order, with regional water board approval.
- The first proposed fee schedule was brought to the State Water Board for consideration and adopted into the California Code of Regulations in Spring 2021. This fee schedule is reviewed annually as part of the water quality fee process.

Development and outreach

This order was developed under regulatory authority of the California Water Code in consultation and collaboration with industry, environmental, tribal, regulatory, and other interested public parties.

[Ex Parte](#) communication was received after the public comment period closed on Aug. 5, 2020. These comments were considered and are reflected in the final adopted requirements.

Between August 2022-23, approximately 3,000 outreach letters were mailed to California winery businesses to provide awareness of the order. The letters included a link to an online survey designed to assist winery owners in determining enrollment applicability.

Additional Resources

- State Water Board adopted [Resolution No. 2021-0001](#) and associated [order No. WQ 2021-0002-DWQ](#).
- [Order program webpage](#) has up-to-date program news, enrollment, and fee information, adopted documents, and resources and guides. Website Quick Response (QR) code:



- Order fee schedule and fee information are available on the [fees program webpage](#).
- Winery Order enrollment status can be found using the [General Order/Enrollee Report Criteria](#) tool in the California Integrated Water Quality System (CIWQS).
 - Enter 2021-002-DWQ in the Winery Order Number search area and/or any additional search criteria then run the report. The results page will show all enrollees including the total number and the number with active coverage.

Stay Informed! Sign up for Water Boards Water Quality [email bulletins](#) for the *Statewide General Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for Wineries*

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